

## **Bethany Theological Seminary Report — 2022**

As an innovative learning community grounded in an Anabaptist and Radical Pietist witness, Bethany Theological Seminary empowers every student to lead through spiritual engagement, faith-filled thought, and transformative practice — so that the world flourishes. The Seminary's attention, energy, and resources are focused on two primary goals: removing any obstacles that might keep a qualified student who is answering God's call to ministry and service and providing an exceptional biblical and theological education that prepares our students to minister and lead in a variety of contexts.

We endeavor to respond to the emerging interests and passions of students and support the needs of the Church by offering an evolving and dynamic set of master's degree and certificate programs and to make it possible for students to graduate from Bethany without taking on additional student or consumer debt.

Our aim is to provide an excellent seminary education to a diverse student body, preparing our graduates to minister wherever they are called. Many of our graduates continue to gain ordination in the Church of Brethren. Others serve and lead within non-profit organizations, as scholars and teachers, or as writers. We also attract students from other denominations who are drawn to Bethany's distinctive mission and, in turn, enrich classroom conversations with their varied life experiences and perspectives.

### **Leadership**

#### **Board of Trustees**

Dr. Eric Bishop (Pomona, Calif.) continues as chair of the Bethany Board of Trustees, while Rev. Audrey Hollenburg-Duffey (Vienna, Va.) serves as vice chair. Cathy Huffman (Rocky Mount, Va.) is secretary of the board. The newest trustees are Dr. Drew Hart (Harrisburg, Pa.), Jacqueline Hartley (Elgin, Ill.), and Dr. Steven Longenecker (Harrisonburg, Va.)

#### **Campus Leadership**

Rev. Dr. Jeff Carter is in his ninth year as president of Bethany. A leadership team works closely with the president to guide decision-making and ensure proactive pursuit of the Seminary's mission. This year Jeff has been a Sunday preacher for the Church of the Brethren congregations in Bridgewater, Va., Elizabethtown, Pa., and Laverne, Calif. Locally, he preached at First Presbyterian Church and First English Lutheran Church in Richmond, Ind. He was also spoke at the Prince William County (Va.) 9/11 memorial service as well as the memorial service for Dr. Paul Wampler, a former Bethany Board Member. Jeff continues to be very involved in the local community, serving on the boards of Richmond Symphony Orchestra and the Wayne County Chamber of Commerce.

## **Major Initiatives**

### **Access and Affordability**

Bethany has made considerable progress in making an excellent seminary education accessible and affordable for all qualified students, so that those who are answering a call from God to ministry and service are not tripped up by financial and logistical challenges. This year 114 students have enrolled in Bethany courses (up from 63 in 2017) while total student borrowing has been reduced from more than \$300,000 per year in 2011 to less than \$40,000 this academic year. Making the programs we offer available to a more diverse group of students allows us to respond to evolving nature of ministry — both inside and outside the traditional church.

### **Innovation and Creativity**

Among our central challenges is offering a truly exceptional educational experience to all our students when most of our students attend class at a distance (over Zoom), while a smaller but growing number choose to attend in-person. The pandemic has underscored this difficulty, and our teaching faculty are always exploring new and better ways to use classroom technology to improve the teaching and learning environment, as well as creating new courses — and even new certificate and degree programs — in response to student interests and needs. By maintaining a culture of innovation and creativity, the Seminary assures that our graduates are comfortable with technology and well-equipped to balance the use of technology with the desire of people to gather in person in a variety of ministry settings. To that end, we continue to invest in our technology capabilities both on the Richmond campus and at the Technology Centre in Jos, Nigeria.

Our commitment to innovation and creativity means that we also support our faculty as they regularly evaluate and adjust course offerings in response to student needs. The introduction of the Master of Arts in Theopoetics and Writing and the Master of Arts in Social and Spiritual Transformation is responsible for much of our growth in enrollment. We also continue to see strong enrollment in the MDiv program. (See information about this year's review of the MDiv program below.)

### **Our Nigeria Connection**

Bethany's program in Nigeria continues to make connections between students and scholars in the U.S. and Nigeria and cultivates classroom discussions that are beneficial to all. This year we hired our first full-time employee in Nigeria — **Rev. Joshua Sati**. An ordained minister with a background as a pastor, youth minister, and Christian education leader, he will help us connect with a wider circle of potential students and maintain partnerships with organizations like Jos Evangelical Theological Seminary (JETS) and a bookstore used by students in Jos.

We have also been fortunate to welcome Dr. Dauda Gava, provost of Kulp Theological Seminary, who served as scholar-in-residence this spring. (See full description below.)

The Certificate in Biblical Peacemaking is attracting a growing cohort of students to take classes at the Technology Centre in Jos. Sharon Flaten, (who, as of this writing, was expected to graduate with her MDiv from Bethany in May 2022), has returned to Nigeria to live and work as our liaison to students.

### **Welcome and Hospitality**

The “Bethany Neighborhood” — a collection of houses near campus where residential students live — continues to grow. During 2021, Bethany leased two additional houses from Earlham College and renovated them using volunteer labor. The newest houses (located at 325 and 341 College Avenue in Richmond) have been named in honor of Miller Davis (a former Bethany trustee) and Howard Miller (MDiv ’64 and DMin ’78) who have provided volunteer leadership to several renovation projects. The Seminary now has seven houses, with room for more than 20 residential students, with additional lodging for short-term visitors. Several of the houses have adjoining backyards, which have provided students with opportunities for fellowship and group endeavors like a community garden.

### **Seeking Racial Justice**

Bethany is continuing its multifaceted efforts to pursue racial justice. The foundation of this effort is a framework created in 2019 which was designed to intentionally confront racial hierarchy, implicit bias, and systemic racism. This approach grew out of the Seminary’s Strategic Vision Implementation Plan goal “to promote cultural, racial, and theological diversity throughout the institution.”

This goal has prompted formal reviews of policies, human resources, hiring practices, and curriculum. The Seminary has sought the counsel of outside experts to review current approaches and devise improved guidelines in each area. Bethany’s Board of Trustees has issued the following statement in support of the Seminary’s racial justice efforts:

*“As Children of God, we join with others to pursue the path of righteousness in the midst of social turmoil. We humbly and fully commit ourselves as members of the Bethany Theological Seminary Board of Trustees to stand against all forms of racism, discrimination, bias, privilege, abusive power, colonialism, and racial hierarchy. We recognize these insidious elements are pervasive on individual, interpersonal, institutional, and systemic levels. We also grieve the ugly and harmful mental, physical, spiritual, educational, social, economic, ecological, and societal effects these foundations impose upon our human family.*

*To this end, we are dedicated to eliminating all such structures in this Seminary and working to uphold justice, equity, diversity, interconnectedness, and accessibility. In doing so, we fully acknowledge and accept that this journey will require us as individuals and as a*

*collective Board to be faithfully and consistently committed to seeking God's will in the ways and spirit of Jesus, Our Lord and Savior. We also understand that our work will be challenging, uncomfortable, and painful but, in doing so, remain resolved that all facets of our Bethany learning community—including this Board—will become transformed into new and greater instruments through our efforts to fulfill the Seminary's mission so that the world flourishes. It is in this spirit that we call upon our entire Bethany family to join us as we, together, strive to address this vital charge.*

*It is our hope and prayer for God to act in and through us as we intentionally work to fulfill this important and necessary calling. With humble hearts, may we always be reminded that sincere dedication to hope, continued learning, self-examination, and evaluation will be integral to our efforts, and that there is no ending to this journey. And, with Jesus as our example and inspiration, may our efforts as a Board contribute in positive ways that bring about a new and beloved community at Bethany Theological Seminary."*

## **Academic Community**

### **Valuable partnerships**

Bethany students and faculty benefit from several productive partnerships with other educational institutions. Bethany has teamed up with New Brunswick Theological Seminary (in New Jersey) to bring students from both schools together to discuss the challenges of ministry during a time of extreme societal division. We will continue to collaborate with Columbia Theological Seminary (in Georgia) to offer intensive courses that introduce students to African American interpretations of scripture. In both cases, these partnerships provide students opportunities to learn alongside a diverse group of students who bring a variety of life experiences and perspectives to class discussions.

The Seminary continues to partner closely with the Earlham School of Religion, and students from both schools participate in joint classes, worship services, and social events. The collaboration is especially rich for students and faculty in the Master of Arts in Theopoetics and Writing, a popular degree program at both institutions. More recently, we have partnered with Eastern Mennonite University which offers online courses in nonprofit leadership open to students in our Master of Arts in Spiritual and Social Transformation.

Bethany continues to explore new partnerships with other institutions, including Reid Chapel AME Church in Washington DC, as we seek additional opportunities for cross-cultural education for students.

### **MDiv program review**

Bethany faculty are revising the Master of Divinity program requirements this year, effective fall 2022. The new degree will remain 72 credit hours (24 courses). The distribution balances a required "core" of eight foundational courses across disciplines (Bible, History, Ministry, Peace,

and Theology), continued emphasis on the importance of five integrative courses in Ministry Formation, and increased flexibility for student choice in the remaining 11 courses. Faculty will also be creating "Suggested Courses for Vocational Tracks," lists of recommended course sequences tied to the range of vocational interests relevant to our MDiv students. The updated MDiv will remain available for local students who study on campus and those at a distance, through multiple course formats (weekly block, synchronous video, asynchronous online, and intensives).

### **Scholar-in-Residence**

This year, Bethany was blessed to have Dr. Dauda Gava as a visiting international scholar-in-residence. Dr. Gava is provost of Kulp Theological Seminary in Jos, Nigeria, and a Pauline scholar. He has collaborated with Dr. Dan Ulrich to team teach a well-received course on the Book of Romans. They will offer that course most recently as a January intensive in 2022, with Dr. Gava teaching from the Technology Center in Jos.

During the Spring Semester, while he was on campus, Dr. Gava taught a semester-long block course on Paul's letter to the Philippians, and he will be writing a commentary on the Book of Titus. In addition, he preached at a chapel service. He was joined in Richmond by his wife, Dr. Kanadi Gava, who shared some of her recently completed dissertation research.

### **Academy**

#### **Selected Faculty Activities**

**Dr. Joelle Hathaway**, assistant professor of theology, enjoyed teaching new courses such as *Spirituality and Ecology: The Sabbath Poetry of Wendell Berry* and *Christian Themes in the Gallery, Contemporary Images in the Church*. She recently published "Mountains: Visual Arts" in *Encyclopedia of the Bible and its Reception*, vol. 19.

**Dr. Scott Holland**, Slabaugh professor of theology and culture, drafted a Theopoetics textbook for our MATW program during his sabbatical. He also completed a chapter for a forthcoming book on Anabaptist political and public theology, among other writing projects. He also serves on the Faith Community Advisory Board of the National World War II Museum and Memorial in Kansas City, which has recently become interested in conscientious objectors as well as exploring the role of faith in support of, and resistance to, the war. In his role on the steering committee of the Global Anabaptist Peace Network (GAPN), Scott participated in several online peace studies educational and planning meetings, including work on a possible summer 2022 event in Indonesia. This continues Bethany's international conference work during the World Council of Churches' Decade to Overcome Violence (2000-2011) and more recent global Just Peace consultations.

**Dr. Dawn Ottoni-Wilhelm**, Brightbill professor of preaching and worship, published an article entitled, "Preaching the Gospel of Mark: The Power of Love Among Us" in *Journal for Preachers*. She contributed a chapter, "The Turn to the Listener: Developing an Ear for Listening and

Preaching,” to the book *What's Right with Preaching Today? Honoring the Legacy of Fred Craddock*. Ottoni-Wilhelm was the keynote speaker at an online conference for Quakers in Pastoral Care and Counseling. She also led an equipping session at the Church of the Brethren Annual Conference entitled, “Preaching in Fearful Times: Building Pastoral and Prophetic Bridges.” She also taught a new course in August for Bethany's new Spiritual and Social Transformation professional MA program: “Spiritual Formation as Contemplation and Action,” co-taught with Prof. Jim Higginbotham of the Earlham School of Religion.

**Dr. Dan Poole**, assistant professor of ministry formation, led a workshop on Technology in Ministry for the *New and Renew* conference, sponsored by the Discipleship Ministries office of the Church of the Brethren in May. He led the same workshop as an Insight Session at the 2021 Annual Conference.

**Dr. Ken Rogers**, professor of historical studies, presented a paper entitled, “Brethren Origins Revisited,” to the online conference of the American Academy of Religion Midwest.

Academic Dean **Steve Schweitzer** published “Synthetic and Literary Readings of Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah” in *Oxford Handbook on the Historical Books of the Hebrew Bible*, ed. B. Kelle and B. Strawn. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2020. He also offered multiple continuing education events on Science Fiction and Theology for congregations and districts. In addition, he presented “Theology at Series End: Helping Congregations Talk about Science Fiction and Theology” as an Annual Conference Insight Session (online), on **July 1, 2021**. He also presented a paper in the inaugural session for a new Utopian Studies Consultation for the Society of Biblical Literature, entitled “Sailing Toward Utopia: At the Intersection of Utopian Studies and Biblical Studies,” (online), **November 21, 2021**.

## **Enrollment**

### **New students for 2021-22 Academic Year, by semester**

Certificate of Achievement in Theological Studies: 1 Fall, 3 Spring

Certificate in Biblical Peacemaking: 2 Fall, 3 Spring

Certificate in Just Peace and Conflict Resolution: 1 Fall, 0 Spring

Certificate in Intercontextual Biblical Interpretation: 6 Fall, 0 Spring

Certificate in Theopoetics and Theological Imagination: 0 Fall, 5 Spring

Master of Arts: 3 Fall, 1 Spring

Master of Theopoetics and Writing: 10 Fall, 8 Spring

Master of Arts in Spiritual and Social Transformation: 4 Fall, 2 Spring

Master of Divinity: 5 Fall, 2 Spring

Occasional Student: 1 Fall, 0 Spring

## **Total enrollment for 2021-22 Academic Year, by program**

Certificate of Achievement in Theological Studies: 7

Certificate in Biblical Peacemaking: 13

Certificate in Just Peace and Conflict Resolution: 5

Certificate in Intercontextual Biblical Interpretation: 2

Certificate in Theopoetics and Theological Imagination: 17

Occasional Student: 1

Master of Divinity: 27

Master of Arts: 13

Master of Arts in Spiritual and Social Transformation: 7

Master of Arts in Theopoetics and Writing: 22

Total Headcount: 114

## **Fiscal Stewardship**

	Fiscal Year 2021	2020	Change	% Change
Assets	64,058,663	53,168,141	10,890,522	20.48%
Endowment	47,575,855	38,691,993	8,883,862	22.96%
Surplus/Deficit	680,565	132,328	548,237	414.30%
Oper. Budget	3,056,066	3,019,062	37,004	1.23%

## **Fundraising**

As the tables below illustrate, Fiscal Year 2021 was a year of mixed results for Bethany fundraising. We are humbled by the generosity of our donors who increased their support to the Bethany Fund which provides for the day-to-day operation of the Seminary. Overall donor count continues to decrease. As you can see below, our "total giving" decreased from FY20 to FY21, largely due to some significant estate gifts received during FY20. We continue to be grateful for individuals, alumni, and congregations who partner with the Seminary in providing a high-quality education at an affordable price.

## **Bethany Fund**

	FY21	FY20	Change
Total donations	\$640,534	\$596,991	\$43,543
Total donors	788	839	(51)

**Total Seminary Giving**

	FY21	FY20	Change
Total donations	\$1,236,689	\$1,320,860	(\$84,171)
Total donors.	866	919	(53)

Blessings,

Jeff Carter

President

Eric Bishop

Chair, Board of Trustees